

Snapshots 2004

Highlighting BLM projects that support the National Fire Plan.



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acres were actually treated. The burn was accomplished using resources from the BLM, Forest Service and private contractors.

Benefits of the burn include improving wildlife habitat, reducing fuel loading, breaking up the fuel continuity, diversifying the age-class structure, increasing forage quality and quantity, and improving watershed health. In addition, the treatment should lead to limited benefits in riparian area health and vigor, improved water quality and overall water yield.

Contact: Mary L. Wilson, (307) 328-4329

Utah

Woolsey-Vandenberg Fuels Reduction Project

In late April the Cedar City, Utah BLM began working on the Woolsey-Vandenberg Fuels Reduction Project in south-central Iron County. The 975 acre project area is located adjacent to the communities of Quichapa and Woolsey Ranch and also borders Highway SR-56. By incorporating fire management objectives and resource

objectives, the project serves as a fuel break to neighboring communities while also restoring wildlife habitat for big game.

The project was designed in cooperation with Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, local chapter of Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife, and U.S. Forest Service. The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources and the Southern Utah Chapter of Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife have contributed \$50,000 in conservation permit dollars from the sale of hunting tags and licenses in the local area to cover labor costs associated with the removal of pinyon and juniper.

The residents of Quichapa and the surrounding area have established an active fire council. They completed writing their community fire plan in May of 2003 and addressed the need for fuel breaks on neighboring BLM lands. Since that time, the council has created two defensible space demonstration lots and has coordinated several community chipping days with National Fire Plan grant money.

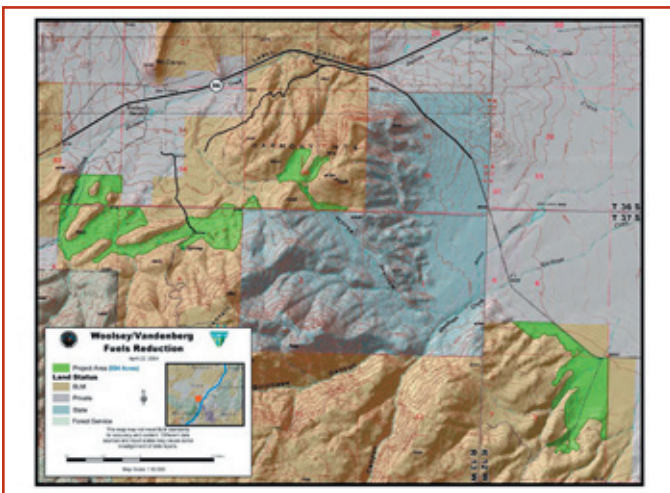
When completed, the Woolsey-Vandenberg Fuels Reduction Project will give residents even more protection from wildfire by linking to a fuel break that Utah Forestry, Fire and State Lands has completed along the Vandenberg Road. By reducing hazardous fuels the Vandenberg Road will be more effective as a



Prior to treatment, this area lies between the communities of Quichapa and Woosley Ranch.



The Bullhog has removed trees along SR56 and the Vandenberg-Bumblebee Road. Approximately 600 acres will be treated using the environmental brushcutter.



Map of the Woolsey-Vandenberg Project Area.

potential escape route and tactical fuel break in the event of a wildfire. The project will decrease the likelihood of a catastrophic wildfire moving from BLM lands on to private property and will ensure that future wildfire suppression activities would be less dangerous for fire fighters and more cost effective.

In addition to providing protection from wildfire, the mosaic patterns of treatments will enhance forage conditions and riparian areas by removing pinyon and juniper trees that are currently intercepting ground water and out-competing the riparian

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This part of the project area was chained in the 1960's; however, pinyon and juniper trees have re-invaded the area.



A contractor has removed trees in this lop and scatter unit adjacent to homes in the Woolsey Ranch area.

In the 1960's, approximately 800 acres of the project area was chained to reduce the encroachment of pinyon and juniper trees. Over the past forty years, however, they have re-invaded areas that were once covered with grasses, forbs, and shrubs. Currently in the project area, pinyon and juniper trees are being removed manually and mechanically to create a mosaic pattern. BLM personnel and contractors are hand cutting areas, using lop and scatter method and are piling other areas to be burned later in the fall and winter. The "Bull Hog", an

vegetation. More water would be made available to the riparian system and existing vegetation within the riparian zone would be released. The areas will also provide thermal cover for wintering big game herds of mule deer.

environmental brush cutter is also being used to mechanically remove trees. Work will continue on the project throughout the summer and should be completed by winter.

Contact: Cedar City BLM (435) 865-3013

Shindy Draw Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project

Between the summer of 2001 and the summer of 2002 the Vernal Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management completed a hazardous fuels reduction project at the mouth of Shindy Draw. The project area is located northwest of Vernal up Dry Fork Canyon.

The Shindy Draw project area consisted of 21 acres of basin big sagebrush with an underlying layer of cheatgrass. Most of the sagebrush reached heights over ten feet tall. North of Shindy Draw there are homes which were built on or near the boundary line that divides the public land from the private property. The purpose of the project was to protect the homes by creating a safety buffer between them and the draw.



Hank Barela, who is 5'9" tall, uses range pole to show height of basin big sagebrush. This was the typical size of sagebrush in the project area.

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The range pole shows the height of one of the fifty piles of sagebrush created by fire crews.

Throughout the summer of 2001 fire crews spent a number of days cutting and piling the brush. Chainsaws were used to do the cutting while the piling was done by hand.

In February of 2002 a handful of fire personnel burned the 50 piles of sagebrush. The piles were burned very early in the year to take advantage of the presence of snow which kept the fire from spreading beyond the piles.



This overview photo is a before picture of the 21 acres.

During the spring, following the fuels reduction project, fire personnel used a native mixture of seeds to reseed the acres. The mixture included fourwing saltbrush, basin wildrye, western wheatgrass and needle and thread. Fire personnel mixed the seed and then used backpack spreaders to spread the seeds over the project area.



This overview after photo was taken two years later from the same overlook.

Two years later, what was once 21 acres of basin big sagebrush, is now 21 acres of low, light fuels consisting of grasses and small brush. This project will be followed by a 600-acre tree thinning project that will continue up Shindy Draw. The mechanical treatment of the trees will be followed by a prescribed burn to remove the downed fuels.

Communities Write Fire Plans with Moab BLM Help

The BLM Moab District Office in cooperation with Utah State Division of Forestry, Fire and State Land and the Manti-La Sal District of the U.S. Forest Service, coordinated and assisted ten communities in writing and completing community fire plans.

Starting in October 2003, the three agencies combined with community members and county administrators held a series of workshops designed to help communities write the plans.

Canyon Terrace, Castle Valley, East Carbon including Sunnyside and Columbia, Old La Sal and Ray Mesa, Pack Creek, Blanding including White Mesa and Johnson Creek, Eastland, and Montezuma Canyon all attended the workshops and started developing fire councils. In addition to the workshops, each of the communities held “in house” meetings with the various agencies to coordinate efforts and keep “everybody on the same page”.

All of these are communities at risk with the exception of Eastland, Johnson Creek and Montezuma Canyon. However, the latter three should be added to the list by the end of 2004. Many of these communities were already involved as National Fire Plan Grant recipients. The remaining communities saw the need for fire mitigation and simply started the process all on their own with guidance from the cooperating agencies.

The community of Castle Valley has taken fire mitigation a step further. They have also applied for and received a grant through Firewise. Through the grant they were able to acquire resources management

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software that will help them in their mapping and fire mitigation efforts.

The agencies worked with two different contractors to hold the community fire plan writing workshops. Community Solutions is the contractor helping with the creative side of plan development, and forester Lenard Stull contracted to get the mechanics of the plan writing done.

The principal of Grouse Creek School expressed an interest in more presentations for the youth to learn of more opportunities and work in the BLM.



Grouse Creek Students Take to the Field

With only five days left in the school year, the one room schoolhouse in Grouse Creek, Utah was paid a visit by staff from BLM's Salt Lake Field Office to talk to children about wild horses, rangeland management, wildland firefighting and the importance of community fire planning.

The Grouse Creek School has 12 students in grades one to ten. The school presentation was a successful in addressing a wide variety of interests and ages. The "little school" enjoyed hearing about the wild horses that roam public lands. Their teacher divulged that this pack of children pretend to be wild horses at recess. Meanwhile, the "big school" was captivated by the fact that they could fight fire someday if they were in good shape and did well in school.

Both grades were treated to a field trip visiting the Bullhog that has been working nearby in Cook Canyon on a hazardous fuels reduction project to thin a thick stand of juniper trees. The operator of the Bullhog spoke with the youngsters of Grouse Creek about Bullhog operation. Considering that many of these children are from ranching backgrounds they were fascinated by the tractor-like machine.



Students watch the BLM Bullhog at work.

Youngsters enjoyed the day watching mechanical work getting done.



Bullhog operator gives the students some up close information about its operation.